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WHAT IS MATERIALISM?

A DISCOURSE

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BY

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WHAT IS MATERIALISM?

By LESLIE STEPHEN.

I AM to speak to-day of a wide and difficult question. I may as well premise that I shall not stop to guard myself as though I were engaged in a scholastic disputation; but I must endeavour to point out certain common ambiguities of language. All philosophical discussions have a tendency to take the form of arguments as to the meanings of words. Such arguments, it must be added, frequently imply very serious and profound contrasts of opinion. But one consequence is that words which have been much used in philosophical controversy tend to change their meaning and to become charged with wholly new contents. When such words have passed from the philosophic arena into the more heated regions of theological controversy, and when they have spread yet further, and got into the hands of the gentlemen who expound theories of the universe in articles and lectures, they lose all precision; they are no longer fit for use as constituents in the construction of a system, but are the mere conventional "half-bricks" which a controversialist considers himself to be justified in casting at the head of a stranger to his own system.

This has been the fate of the word "Materialist," and my purpose to-day is to consider—so far as I can—what are the meanings which it covers in point of fact, how they are properly related, and in what applications they convey a serious or a justifiable imputation. "Materialism," in its strictest sense, means a certain philosophical or metaphysical doctrine. Secondly, it means a certain religious or (as would generally be said) anti-religious doctrine. Thirdly, it is applied both to a certain ethical doctrine, and to certain moral tendencies, which are regarded as naturally allied to the doctrine, whether as suggested by it or fostered by it.

I must, in the first place, touch, however inadequately, upon the

metaphysical or philosophical question. Materialism is the doctrine that matter is the sole ultimate reality. There is nothing which is not material. The opposite doctrine is, that mind is the sole ultimate reality. Nothing exists except mind variously modified. The most famous historical representatives of these two theories in English literature are Thomas Hobbes, a writer of astonishing power and originality, whose influence upon men's minds in the seventeenth century has never been surpassed until the rise of Darwinism in our own; and Bishop Berkeley, the subtlest of all English metaphysicians, whose influence, in spite of the ridicule of sciolists, is traceable in English speculation down to the present day. The conclusion to which modern speculation is gravitating is, I think, in some form or other, that the antithesis does not really represent a contradiction, but rather two methods of combining experience, each perfectly legitimate in its own sphere, and leading to apparent contradiction, when, and only when, there is a misunderstanding as to the true limits of possible knowledge. Let me try to put this briefly.

Materialism, in the first place, represents the necessary and proper attitude of the man of science, *i.e.* of physical science. His problem is simply this: to give the laws of all perceived or perceivable phenomena in terms of time and space; to measure everything that can be measured in miles and feet, hours and seconds. He speaks of "forces" and "energies," but he knows nothing of their intrinsic nature, but only of their visible, tangible, sensible manifestations; and so long as he confines himself to a certain sphere, we go along with him willingly. We follow the triumphs of the astronomer and of the physicist who deals with the refined questions of light, heat, electricity, and the laws of chemical combination, without hesitation or misgiving. We wish him good-speed, and rejoice in his powers. But the time comes when he is ambitious to apply the same method to organic and living matter; when he traces, or tries to trace, the genesis of animals from mere protoplasm, and of protoplasm from lifeless matter; when he studies the brain and the nervous system; and when, resting on the undeniable fact that the brain is, in some sense, the organ of thought, he attempts to push his conquests further, and seems to be approaching a physical or mechanical theory of thought itself. Then we become alarmed and ask whether we shall be cheated out of our belief that reason and emotion exercise some influence, and be driven to hold that our consciousness is a

mere phantom, looking on at the mechanical operations of an automaton.

Before answering, let us take the position of the idealist. It was given by Berkeley, crudely and imperfectly, but yet so as to state the essential and invincible position. We can, he urged in substance, know of nothing but thoughts, emotions, volitions, sensations, modifications of our own consciousness. The whole of my universe consists of my own feelings; either such as are actually present at a given time, or such as have been, or will be, or might be present; and beyond this of the feelings which I attribute to other beings, of consciousness identical with or analogous to my own. I construct my universe by extending my own and annexing your consciousness. The man of science deals with the perceived; he takes no account of the perceiver; in common technical phrase, he remains at the objective instead of the subjective point of view; he is absolutely bound to do so; he must do so, if he would discover truth or keep his mind clear; but he is not entitled to assume that because he only attends to one aspect of things, that aspect can, in point of fact, exist without the other; that there can be anything perceived without a perceiver, or anything simply "objective" without a "subjective" aspect implied. We speak, for example, to take Berkeley's apparent paradox, of some definite object—the sun, let us say. That, for the man of science, is a mass of matter of definite dimensions. But, regarded under a different aspect, the sun is equally the name of a certain group of feelings, of heat, light, and so forth, present perhaps, to me now; which was and will be present to me and you and to every conscious inhabitant of the solar system or the universe. And if I ask, what it is as apart from such a group of feelings, or rather when feeling itself is supposed to be annihilated, I must, to be logical, answer "I cannot possibly know." The verbal answer is "matter"; but of matter as something outside of sensation, an abstract entity, we neither know, nor, as Berkeley has taught us, can we ever know anything. The dead, mechanical substratum is a mere figment—a word corresponding to no intelligible thought. The universe is therefore built up of feelings, in a sense at least as true as that in which it is built up of matter.

There is, of course, a paradoxical sound in such statements—an air of over-refinement and flying in the face of common sense. Yet I must go a step further before I can show that the logic is not only

(or so I think) sound, but of practical importance. The external world is known to us through the senses alone. It is only in so far as I can see, touch, handle, that I infer the existence of anything beyond myself. But there is one all-important distinction in regard to my inference. The world of physical science is that which we construct directly from the senses. Physical science is nothing but a systematic and accurate co-ordination of all the directly sense-given knowledge. But there is, if I may say so, another external world, which is equally known to me through the senses, as its external manifestation, though not known directly as sensible. That is the world of the thoughts, emotions, volitions, of the consciousness of other beings than myself. I know of the existence of this room because I can see, touch, grasp. I know precisely in the same way of the existence of your bodies in the room—that is, by the direct evidence of my senses. But I know of your thoughts and emotions only by an indirect process of inference, which must always start from the sense-given evidence. I see that a man's hand trembles as I see that a leaf trembles or a candle flickers. I know that he is frightened only because I see that his hand trembles, or from some other external indication, which always comes back in the last resort to some evidence of the senses. I know of his bodily existence because I see him; of his state of mind only by a variety of inferences, based always on some observation of fact or of sense-given knowledge.

Now, the question remains, how are we to express this distinction? We must, I think, reply thus. In both cases, we must first observe, there is an inference. When I see a table, I infer that you see the same table; that is, I *infer* that you have identically the same sensations. But I cannot be directly conscious of your sensations. I cannot see a man's sense of light any more than I can see his emotion of fear. To speak in such a way is to talk absolute nonsense; to put together sounds instead of using words; to combine phrases so as to convey no meaning. Yet this is the nonsense to which a materialist is not unfrequently driven. To preserve an apparent consistency, he has to talk, not of sensations of light or perceptions of figured objects, but of red or blue sensations, square or round perceptions. He avoids such phrases because they are explicit nonsense; but he slides into them, and therefore into implicit nonsense unawares, because they are the natural tendency of

his ways of thought or, at least, of speech. And, if we think it out, we shall find that the real source of the confusion is this. The external sensible world is the same for you and me. When I have the set of sensations corresponding to a given object, I *infer* at once, without more ado, that you have an identical set of sensations. The sensation, therefore, comes to be regarded, and quite truly, as something independent of any idiosyncrasy of yours or mine; therefore as a something independent of the particular person who has it; and next (and here is the fallacy) as something independent of consciousness in general. Light and heat are words which properly have no meaning whatever, except in reference to beings endowed with a capacity for seeing and feeling. But because, so far as we live in the same world, our feelings have the same laws, we imagine the feelings themselves to be somehow external to all consciousness. We speak of a bright, hot body existing apart from all possibility of sensations, and do not observe that our words have lost all meaning whatever—that brightness and heat mean, and can only mean, certain affections of the senses.

And, in the next place, since we know of a consciousness different from our own, of thought, emotion, volition, only through their manifestations in the external world constructed out of sensation alone; as, therefore, in this case, we have to make an *indirect* inference—to infer that another man is frightened, not because we have the same emotion, but because (for example) we see him tremble and turn pale, that is because we have certain sensations common to all other observers—we are led to imagine that the sensations have also a superior reality. As far as my own direct consciousness goes, I am as sure of the reality of fear as of the reality of the visible or external sensations. But since I know of your emotion only by an indirect process of inference from sensations, I imagine it to be somehow less real than sensation. Because my knowledge is dependent, I fancy that the reality is dependent. The order of inference is mistaken for an order of existence. The thought is imagined to be a mere appendage to the external manifestation of thought. Thus, we first overlook the fact that all kinds of knowledge of fact imply an inference from sensations; we then falsely attribute external reality to sensations inconceivable apart from a percipient being, and then we suppose the other modifications of consciousness known to us through the sensations to be, in point

of fact, less real, or absolutely unreal—mere phantoms subordinate to the working of the mechanical automaton.

If I have been forced to be unduly metaphysical, it is because the popular view is also metaphysical. It implicitly involves a metaphysical theory, with the disadvantage that the metaphysics are erroneous. It can only be met by attempting to give the true theory which it implicitly denies. And to show this, it must be sufficient to apply the conclusions we have reached to the most obvious cases.

The universe, it is sometimes said, is in danger of being resolved into the blind play of mechanical forces, and the mind into a result of material changes in the brain. Let us suppose the scientific reasoner to have carried out his observations to the furthest possible point, and ask what will be the true inference. I do not wish to take refuge in saying what has not yet been proved, but what that is which can never be proved and which there is no tendency to prove. The evolutionist, it is said, points to a period at which consciousness was non-existent, at which the earth and the solar system were mere masses of incandescent gas, a mad play of incoherent atoms. All sentient and animate existence has slowly grown out of this chaos in which there is no room for the action of mind or a general intelligence. Now what the evolutionist really aims at doing certainly sounds like this, but there is an important difference. He endeavours to say what you would have seen if you had lived through ages of indefinite duration; what conceivably some observer or observers may have seen; and so to detect the law of the great series of phenomena which have succeeded one another or melted into each other through countless æons. If certain speculations are well-founded, such observers may have seen or did see a state of things in which no organized or living being existed in the chaos of atoms out of which the world has grown. But, we must notice, we are still dealing with phenomena; that is, with things perceived or perceivable, and if we ask what existed at this period independently of all observation, we must again answer, we do not know, we cannot possibly make even a conjecture. The mind becomes an absolute blank in regard to things outside all consciousness. All inference, negative and positive, becomes illusory. We reach an intellectual vacuum. The supposed abstraction, a blind dead matter instead of all mind, is something of which we can know nothing. It is a mere cipher, a name without any contents what-

ever, a blank form for absolute ignorance. We may hope, within very narrow limits, to lay down rules of phenomena; but we are not one step the nearer to knowing what a phenomenon *is*—what kind of force lay behind it, what hands pulled the strings of the puppet. We cannot peer into the abyss or roll back the curtain.

> "Immerst in darkness, round the drama rolled,
> Which for the pastime of eternity,
> Thou didst thyself enact, contrive, behold."

And therefore we no more lower our conceptions of the living being by tracing it back to the dark germ out of which it was evolved, than we raise the germ by attributing to it a potentiality of higher existence. We are limited by the nature of thought, to watching the actual series and projecting it backwards or forwards. Of what lies beneath or behind, we have only a sham knowledge. Matter and soul or mind taken by themselves are purely negative phrases. We know of nothing but consciousness in its various modifications, and to speak of a time in which it was not, is to speak of something of which we cannot think—that is, to make sounds, not to use words.

And this applies equally to the imaginary danger that thought may be resolved into mere mechanical action. We are as sure as we can be of anything that the thoughts and emotions of ourselves and others are as much realities as our sensations, and play a real part in the evolution of the great drama. We know, it is true, that we can only get at other people's thoughts and emotions through some sensible manifestation. In some way, which has hitherto eluded all enquiry, every thought in the mind corresponds (so we must assume) to some process in the brain. When Shakespeare produced Hamlet or Newton the Principia, something happened in the little lumps of matter which we call their brains. That is tacitly admitted in every reasoning about our neighbours. To make the reasoning more definite and precise is the aim of physiologists. Hitherto they are at the very threshold of the science. They have scarcely even raised the very hem of the curtain. But let them go as far as they will, the ultimate conclusion would only be this—that when *I* have a certain sensation or should have it if I could look into a living brain; when, therefore, I see, or should see, certain motions of material particles, I see the external signature of an intellectual process; that is, I have a sensation which indicates that certain corresponding—how corresponding we cannot say even in the vaguest way—but certain

corresponding intellectual and emotional processes are taking place in your mind. But these processes are not the less real than the signs by which I (in the supposed case) become aware of them. Nor do they in any sense follow a mere mechanical law. For the matter which constitutes a brain, though it obeys the ordinary mechanical laws of gravitation and so forth, has also laws of its own—in virtue of what we call its organization—a word which simply implies that it has the new set of laws implied in its correspondence to the action of an intelligence.

In either case, and in all cases, no such result as is sometimes anticipated is to be dreaded from physical science properly understood, however far it may advance. The old "I think, therefore I am," remains:—we can systematize the indications of consciousness, not explain it, or explain it away. The fallacy latent in all materialism, taken as a philosophical system, reveals itself in downright nonsense, when we mistake the assignment of a law of possible consciousness for a specification of a reality outside consciousness. It is a mistake of science for metaphysics. But the supposed danger that mind can ever be analysed into matter, or thought and emotions proved to be unreal, is a mere chimera, resulting from a misconception of the limits of thought.

And, having laid down this point, I can deal with the other senses of materialism. For, in the first place, a religious materialism is supposed to mean a disbelief in the soul as a permanent existence separate from the body. A materialist is properly defined as one who refuses to admit of personal immortality. Now, one question immediately arises, if we would not be cheated by words. Is the soul really conceived as an immaterial substance? It is so in name, but what is meant by the name? The importance of asking this question appears from the fact that, historically speaking, the earlier conceptions of the soul are plainly and unequivocally materialist. Men of science have lately occupied themselves with tracing the savage doctrine of animism. Animism is a belief in a soul which differs from the body, not in being immaterial, but at most in being composed of a finer matter. The soul, in the belief of simple tribes, is still in need of food and fire and clothes; it requires to be fed and housed, and after a time it gradually dissipates itself like a vapour, and ceases to exist, if it does not prolong existence in some land of shadows, where it still indulges in hunt-

ing and fighting and feasting. Moreover, this conception still exists in all the less refined minds, and in some highly cultivated minds, and is represented in all the ruder forms of religion. It has been said, though I know not how truly, that a genuine belief in immaterial substance did not exist until Descartes, that is until a comparatively late period of philosophical history. Souls, according to Tertullian, expand and contract, wriggle and twist, like worms among the interstices of matter. I need only to point to the sensuous images of hell and heaven, sanctioned by great poets and accepted by the vulgar in all ages. In a famous passage of Jeremy Taylor, the great preacher has exhausted his imagination to describe the physical torments of every conceivable sense which are provided for the damned. Franciscus Ribera, says Taylor's quaint contemporary, Burton, will have hell a material and local fire in the middle of the earth, 200 Italian miles in diameter. But Lessius will have the local hell far less, one Dutch mile in diameter, all filled with fire and brimstone ; because, as he demonstrates, that space cubically multiplied will make a space able to hold 800,000 million of damned bodies (allowing each body 6 ft. square), which will abundantly suffice because (this is satisfactory, though I don't know how it is proved) it is certain that there will not be 100,000 millions of damned. This is a grotesque evolution from a mode of belief still accepted by the vulgar—even the educated vulgar. If we doubt the essentially materialistic nature of the soul, we need only look at the pictures or listen to the addresses by which the faith of ignorant Catholics or Protestants is fanned to excitement, or attend one of the séances in which intelligent philosophers prove the immortality of the soul by discovering that so-called spirits can untie knots in ropes or write with slate pencils.

Now this is no accident of belief. Of course it represents the sensuous imagery by which a philosophical doctrine is shadowed out in the cruder minds. But the question is, what remains when the sensuous imagery is really destroyed, and the philosophical doctrine really accepted ? What conception at all remains of the soul when you seriously think of it apart from all physical manifestation or embodiment ? It is only through the medium of sensations, as I have said, that we can know of any other consciousness than our own. Annihilate that medium, and can we think of a conscious

being at all? Is there any such thing conceivable as abstract thought, emotion, volition, absolutely free from material embodiment, or as life apart from all the processes which go to make up life here? We may deny the materialist doctrine that nothing exists except matter; because matter itself in this sense turns out to be a word without meaning. But can we assert that there is anything knowable which has not its material aspect? What, in fact, can the philosopher say to the problem if he is resolved fairly and truly, as well as nominally, to part company with materialism—really and truly to purify the soul from all material taint, to substitute for the contrast of two unthinkable entities, spirit and matter, the conception of a contrast between object and subject, perceiving and perceived? To me it seems, I confess frankly, that all that he can really say comes to very little. He may, indeed, say that to the man of science there is no such thing as creation and annihilation, as the sudden interpolation of a new thing into the universe or its sudden elimination. All that we can ever see or know is transformation, evolution, a perpetual alteration, but never a diminution of the whole. And it may seem probable, though I know not how to state it, that there is a subjective formula answering to this objective formula, that consciousness is as indestructible as force, and therefore that we must conceive—in some way or other—of a continuity of consciousness as well as of its objects. But the argument leaves a gap. Such a doctrine—vague enough as it is—can hardly be applied to the support of what is called personal immortality. It is as consistent with the various religions which contemplate an absorption of the individual into a world-soul, as with the religion which supposes that the person is an indestructible and eternal unit. To pronounce dogmatically upon such questions seems to me to be foolish. It would perhaps even be thought wrong were it not that somehow or other it has come to be regarded as a duty to profess the utmost confidence of belief upon matters in which the only legitimate conclusion is that ignorance is in proportion to the impossibility of knowledge, and hence that uncertainty is an absolute necessity. Let us be content not to pronounce with decision on the points where the deepest philosophers are most at a loss—especially if we do not happen to be philosophers at all.

And now I can approach what is really the important question—the question of the bearing of these theories upon conduct. What,

I have to ask, is materialism in the ethical sense? After my previous remarks I think that the answer is clear, if we are logically to carry out our conclusions; and moreover I think that the answer is one which has always been implicitly accepted. The aversion to philosophical materialism depends on this, that it appears to throw doubt upon the reality of the higher functions of thought, emotion, volition. The aversion falls in with the logical objection, for I have tried to show that no such doubt is logically possible, nor is really sanctioned by the scientific view. And, in the same way, ethical materialism should mean such theories of ethics as deny—implicitly or explicitly—the existence of those emotions and reasonings which are essential to a really moral action. If, for example, the action which apparently springs from love of our neighbour could be shown to be, in any intelligible result, a mere product of mechanical laws of motion, we should certainly take the whole meaning out of moral law. And again, in the sphere of practice, it may be said that a man who acts as if love of truth or love of our neighbour had no real existence, or (though the sense is not quite the same) as if the merely physical appetites which he shares with the brutes supplied the only really existing motives, or the only motives worth taking into account, he may be not unfairly called a materialist. This description falls in, I think, with the view which has been generally taken by the loftier moralists. Auguste Comte, the great thinker to whom I should acknowledge my obligations the more readily because he has often been unfairly ridiculed, says, that the essence of materialism is the explanation of the higher by the lower—of the laws of life, for example, by the material laws of inorganic matter. And doubtless there is a connection between this tendency to such explanations and the tendency to explain all the higher motives as merely cases of the lower motives. The philosophic materialist finds it difficult, for example, to bring genuine altruism, a real desire to do good to others, into his system; and the acutest writers of the class have shown great ingenuity in explaining everything that looks like self-sacrifice or nobility of feeling into the covert action of some baser motive. Virtue, says Mandeville, one of the cleverest, is the offspring which flattery begot upon pride. When we think that we are acting from a good motive we are merely cheating ourselves, or cheated by our neighbours, into some subtle form of hypocrisy. The virtuous pretence is a mere blind to conceal motives identical with

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those which animate the criminal or the sensualist, though it happens that we can gratify them more securely by acting so as to excite the applause instead of the resentment of others. I will only say, however, upon this point, that if a man can be a materialist at all consistently, if he can describe feelings without absolute contradiction or downright nonsense, in terms of material phenomena, he may, for anything I know, find some way of expressing the higher as well as the lower instincts. The true objection to the system is, that it will express neither with any accuracy. It is difficult to say what is the logical result of a system which begins by self-contradiction, and, therefore, we may say of the philosophical materialist, not only what must be said of all philosophers, that the man's practice may be better than his principles; but also that if his principles can be made to work at all, they may be stretched to include a better morality than he possibly contemplates.

But the religious argument is of more relevance. The man who denies the existence of a soul is called a materialist, and on one assumption, the statement that such a denial implies also a moral materialism is justifiable. The distinction may be taken to imply that the soul is the seat of reason and of the higher instincts; whereas the body is, in some way, the condition or organ of the lower instincts. To deny the existence of the soul is, of course, in that sense, to deny the existence of the faculties by which man is distinguished from the brutes. And then we reach the formula "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" That is, let us gratify the lower appetites, for in fact we have no others to gratify. But suppose that the philosopher who denies the existence of the soul denies equally the existence of the body; suppose him to say not, "I accept your division, and then deny the reality of one of the two assumed existents;' but, I deny your principle of distinction altogether; I regard abstract matter and an abstract spirit as equally unthinkable; I hold, in short, that your theory is a sensuous image inadequately representing the true mode of distinction; in that case, the issue becomes different. In fact, as I have said, the believer in a soul may—perhaps must—retain a materialist element in his belief. The question still remains, what is his real view of the nature of the soul, after he has professed his belief that it will survive the body? Is it still really conceived with material attributes? If so he may still preach an ethical materialism. The excellent Paley (I use the epithet without any

intention of satire) maintained, as you may remember, that the essence of virtue was doing good to our neighbours, from hopes or fears of rewards or punishments after death. Paley has the merit—here and elsewhere—of saying plainly what he means, and therefore of saying very often something that shocks people who believed the same without knowing what it meant. And here, he brings out the point with admirable precision. I should say (following most moralists) that the essence of virtue was to do good to your neighbour from love to your neighbour. Paley holds that that is a mere Pagan theory, and that you are not really virtuous till you are hoping for heaven or fearing hell. Now, we must ask, what do you mean by heaven and hell? If you take the view of hell maintained by Ribera and Lessius, your motive to virtue is the dread of being shut up in a furnace, a mile in diameter, full of sulphur and brimstone; or, in any case, pure physical fear. The one driving wheel of morality according to this is fear of material torment. Being virtuous is acting from terror of the lash, and the difference between saint and sinner is that one is more convinced than the other that he will be caught and sent to a posthumous prison. Such a doctrine is materialistic, and not the less is it really so, whether the policeman is the A 1, round the corner, or the policeman with horns and hoofs in the pit of sulphur and brimstone. But Paley did not, I fancy, believe in hell except as a sensuous image. Why then did he attribute such importance to the supernatural sanction? For a very simple reason. Because he held that the selfish motives were the only motives, or the only motives worth notice. Therefore he held that men could only be kept from vice by the dread of personal suffering. As they are not sure to suffer in this world, they must be made sure of suffering in the next. In other words, the theory is still so far materialistic as it implies a thoroughgoing egoism or a disbelief in the efficacy or reality of unselfish motive. Now, materialism of this kind is not only compatible with a belief in the existence of a soul; but is very frequently expressly associated with it. Theologians, I will do them the justice to say, are as much opposed to each other upon this vital question as philosophers. Many theologians have preached and practised the loftiest morality, and have held it to be inseparably connected with their own doctrine. But, it is also true, that one of the most popular arguments with theologians implies a tacit acceptance of Paley's

theory. That is to say, it is denied that morality can dispense with the sanction of heaven or hell; that people will, in fact, be good unless they see their way to be paid for it; that sympathy with suffering, interest in the welfare of the race, can keep a man straight unless the motives are supplemented by terror for what has been called a supernatural chief justice. Now, I do not now stop to inquire whether this judgment of consequence be well founded. All I have to say is, that it belongs to the materialist system, in so far as it implies a disbelief in the power of those motives in which the materialist finds it hardest to believe. So far as the man shares the materialist view—so far as he disbelieves in the loftier motives, regards them as merely the base instincts in masquerade, so far he will be inclined to think that people cannot be kept out of the broad and pleasant road, unless they, like Bunyan's hero, see a concrete devil standing at the end of it. You are still a materialist philosophically if the soul in which you believe is really a subtler kind of matter. You are still at the materialist side of morality if you say that a man is bound to do good to his neighbour, and yet proclaim that the only way to make him do good is to make him see that it will be doing good to himself.

And here is the final point to which I call attention. The real question, so far as conduct is concerned, is not whether a man will live a longer or a shorter time, a minute or an eternity; but what he is made of while he does last. Are the higher motives realities or shams? If shams, we may as well eat and drink whether we are to die to-morrow or live for ever, for then, in truth, all our conduct is but a hunting for some physical gratification. If they are realities, then, whether we are to die to-morrow or to live for ever, it is an equally good argument for obeying the higher motives, whilst we have time to give them practical effect. It is not a question how long our trumpery personality will last, but how we are actually constituted, live, and move. That is the only test by which to try the character of moral systems.

> We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love,

says Wordsworth, in one of the phrases which stamp him as the greatest of poetical moralists,

> And even as these are well and wisely fixed
> In dignity of Being we ascend.

We rise, in the language more familiar to science, in the scale of

development, so far as we become susceptible of those loftier emotions which take us out of ourselves, present us with higher ideals, stimulate us to further reaching efforts, and awaken sympathies with a larger circle of conscious existence. Materialism, in the moral sense, is any system which tries in practice or theory to explain away such motives, to deny their reality or attenuate their importance, and to regard each man as a separate and distinct atom, kept in order only by an external pressure of downright physical force. The materialism —as the word is sometimes used—which comes with the development of luxury, that which finds a vent in mere æsthetic gratification—is a refined form of the same tendencies; in so far as it implies isolation from the hopes and fears of mankind at large, and a power of treating even the sympathies to which practical application is refused as merely a means of dreamy self-indulgence. All true moral feeling, briefly, rests on the growth of altruism, on identification of ourselves with the greater organisation to which we belong; and the true evil of materialism is that it encourages us to disbelieve, to explain away and to scoff at all manifestations of this spirit.

I have tried to show what is the true connection of the various doctrines briefly indicated, and to show, amongst other things, that doctrines often stigmatized by an invidious name are really freer from the imputed fault than their rivals; nay, that an essentially materialist theory lurks in the theories of those who most frequently denounce materialism. I add, indeed, emphatically, that many men are often better than their theories, and that avowed cynicism and disbelief in generous motive often goes along with really generous conduct. Yet it is desirable that there should be a conformity between our theory and our practice. And whether, in theory or in action, the true test of morality is not any particular doctrine about the duration of our personal existence, but the hearty and sincere acceptance of a conviction of the reality of unselfishness, of the belief that in strengthening and widening, and giving practical effect to our sympathies with our fellows, lies the one satisfactory and adequate employment of our faculties, and the one hope of raising society to be something better, healthier, and happier than it actually is.

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